



The letter pg 1:

June 10, 2020

To: Clayton Spencer

Our world, and the Bates community is broken. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have known this and been experiencing racism in multiple forms at Bates at the hands of members of our community working within the larger institutional structure of systemic racism. Recently, you released a statement addressing recent protests against racism and the college's commitment to combating this for our BIPOC students. This statement, and limiting the acknowledgment to our students, erases the faculty and staff at all levels that experience racism and oppression at Bates as part of their daily existence and perpetuates this harm and trauma.

The name "Bates" echoes alignment and social activism synonymous with anti-racism. There are numerous initiatives and individuals working to unsettle structures of oppression at Bates. There will be no institutional realization of these initiatives without a larger institutional plan devised by the top leaders of the institution. Our name will only protect us for so long and now is the time to act.

During the town hall meeting on Thursday May 21st, 2020, you clearly stated your authority as the leader of the institution and a faculty member with an embedded authority to call together committees for action as you see fit. With respect to this, we call on you to invoke this power immediately and begin the work of developing an institutional plan that restates our commitment to the safety, well-being, education, and professional development of BIPOC faculty, students and staff including a detailed plan of how you will lead us forward through this time. This is not the work of the Office of Equity and Inclusion, this is not the work of the BIPOC members of our community, this is a time for you to demonstrate both your leadership and authority to people together, combat racism, and address historical traumas. With an adequate plan in place, created in consultation with our BIPOC community members, and undergoing revisions til we find the plan to be appropriate for the times, we can proceed as a community.

The plan should clearly address the following:

- Statement acknowledging the Presidential leadership role and the institution's role in acts of oppression and harm against BIPOC faculty, staff, and students.
- Statement acknowledging the ways that Bates structures in addition to individual acts of racism and oppression impact BIPOC faculty, staff, and students as *whole* people (emotional, physical, spiritual, economic, social, intellectual, intergenerational)
- Clearly defined actionable items for disassembling racist structures at the institution on the following timeline: immediate, 1 year, and 3 year.
- Clearly articulated manner in which the President will continue to engage and lead these initiatives, earning the support of our larger community.
- Timeline and mode of assessment as measures for accountability.

The letter pg 2:

In the face of the pandemic, the lowest paid and most vulnerable of our community have lost resources (salary and benefits) that we rely on to meet our basic needs and the needs of our loved ones. We reject the notion of continuing to give more while having resources taken without discussion or consent. We can't afford to give more while receiving less. This is the work of a college President and we call on you to lead us, together, to a better place.

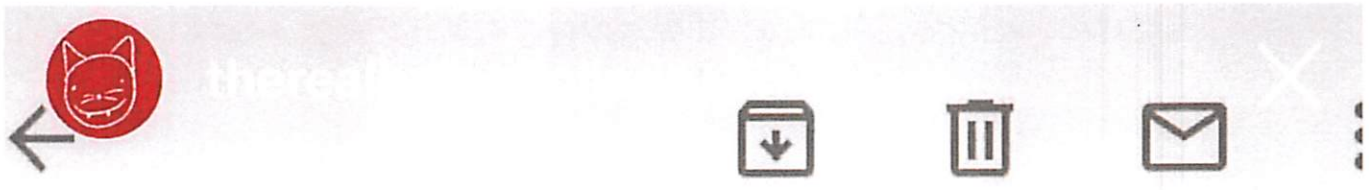
Many BIPOC faculty staff and students have been recruited, and have taken part in recruiting others, with promises of a commitment to our mission, to emancipation, to social justice. Instead, many of us are faced with assimilation, depression, fear, and isolation in a community that either refuses to see us or hates us despite the neoliberal cries of "equality". We want to be seen. We want to feel safe. We want what we have been promised.

Today is **#shutdownacademia**, a time for white and non-Black People of Color (NBPOC) to not only educate themselves, but to define a detailed plan of action to carry forward. In solidarity with the larger movement we will honor **#shutdownbates** in our commitment to moving toward a future.

In anticipation, hope, and support of our Black faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members,

Kristen Barnett PhD, Bates
Kirsten Nunery, Franco Center
Fatima Saidi, Bates Alumni
Michel Droge, Bates VAP
Carrie Diaz Eaton PhD, Bates
Neema Kafwimi, Bates Alumni
Niccolo Bigagli, Bates Alumni
Faaiz Irfan, Bates Alumni
Anelise Shrout PhD, Bates
Caroline Barnes, Bates Alumni
Adriana Salerno PhD, Bates
Francis Eanes PhD, Bates
Sofie Sogaard, Bates Alumni
Susan Stark PhD, Bates
Fatima Sacko, Bates Alumni
Christopher Van Hare, Bates Alumni
Gideon Ikpekaogu, Bates Alumni
Monett Blakey, Bates Alumni
Helene Sudac, Bates Alumni
Chirayu Baral, Bates Alumni
Sarah Ratsimbazafy, Bates Alumni
Meghan Lynch, Bates Alumni
Lauren Ashwell PhD, Bates
Amelia Kelleher, Bates rising senior

**Please consider signing
your name on this! Email
her at karcheo@icloud.com
to sign the letter!**



Dear all,

I hope this email finds you safe and healthy. In light of the recent protests and the silence of Bates regarding its own community, particularly the inability to make institutional headway regarding racial inequalities and oppression despite the identity and the founding principles of our institution, I have written a letter to President Spencer and plan to deliver it tomorrow while organizing a protest at Bates. I'm working on making sure we have plenty of masks and PPE to ensure the safety of our community members gathering and demanding change.

Please consider signing the attached letter. You can indicate your signature by responding to this email. Also, feel free to share this email with other alumni, Students, community members, parents, etc.... I want to make sure we apply pressure for change.

In solidarity,
Kristen Barnett

**A message from
Prof. Kristen Barnett**

Racism at Bates College challenged

SJ sunjournal.com/2020/06/11/racism-at-bates-college-challenged/

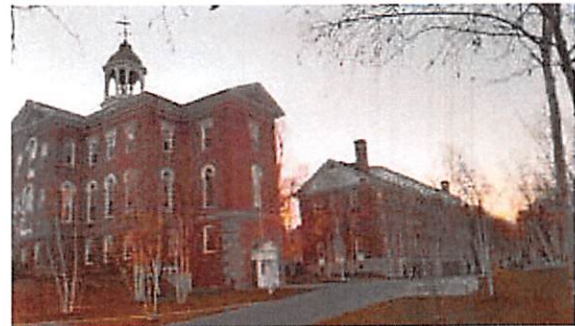
By Steve CollinsSun
Journal

June 11, 2020

LEWISTON – More than 525 people with ties to Bates College signed a letter this week calling on the college president to develop a plan detailing “how you will lead us forward” to combat racism.

“Our world, and the Bates community, is broken,” the letter said, adding that “black, indigenous, and people of color” have experienced racism in many forms at the highly regarded liberal arts college.

The college president, Clayton Spencer, issued a statement earlier this month in which she condemned “acts of extreme cruelty” such as the murder of George Floyd by Minnesota police “and the long history of racial injustice and violence against black, brown and indigenous people that have made them possible and dangerously routine.”



Bates College has been quiet since shutting down in-person classes in March due to COVID-19. Steve Collins/Sun Journal

Her statement, which called racial equity and anti-racism central to the college’s mission, missed the mark with some professors, students and alumni.

The letter said Spencer’s words offered limited acknowledgment of Bates’ students and entirely left out “the racism and oppression at Bates” that many faculty and staff cope with “as part of their daily experience.”

Sean Findlen, the chief communications officer for the college, said in a public statement Thursday that “the work of racial equity and anti-racism is central to Bates’ mission.”

He said that since Spencer arrived at Bates eight years ago, “she has made this a core priority, and substantial progress has been made across many dimensions of the college.”

In that time, Findlen said, “we have recruited the most racially diverse student body in our 165-year history, and we continue to increase the number of first-generation students at Bates.”

In addition, Bates created a vice president of equity and inclusion, has tapped black, indigenous and people of color for 49% of its tenure-track hiring over the past five years

and secured grants to transform its curriculum and teaching to better reflect racial diversity, Findlen said.

“While Bates has made measurable progress in a number of areas, President Spencer is very clear that we, like most institutions in this country, have a long way to go in order to disrupt racist structures built over centuries and decades of American life,” he said.

On their Twitter accounts, four professors backed the letter with the hashtag #ShutDownBates.

One of them, Carrie Diaz Eaton, an associate professor of digital and computational studies, said Thursday that she believes the Bates community “has excellent intentions, but educational institutions are often slow to change.”

“In the midst of a visible crisis for our black colleagues, friends, family and community, this work seems more urgent than ever,” she said.



Carrie Diaz Eaton, a professor at Bates College
Theophil Syslo/Bates College

Diaz Eaton said everyone needs to do more “all the way to the top, where a clear vision and commitment can be vital to quick action, just like we have seen with our rapid transition to remote learning.”

At Bates, she said, there has been “amazing work” to lay the foundations for greater support for the minority community. To create a lasting and “substantially different future together,” though, will require “well-resourced backbone support,” Diaz Eaton said.

The protest involved more than just a letter. Some held a sit-in outside Lane Hall on Wednesday.

Diaz Eaton called it “a great time to reconnect with the community and reflect on our commitment to change, challenge ourselves with what it could mean, ask ourselves if we are really ready to do this work, and support each other.”

In a separate document laying out rules for the protest, the demonstrators said they would gather to ask the college’s top officials “to look inward and examine our own role in racism and oppression and then articulate a plan for the difficult work ahead.”

Their protest is part of a larger one by academics across the country to push institutions of higher education to do more to address racial problems and issues.

At Bates, though, the letter also touched on a sore point among a number of younger and non-tenured faculty and staff who are worried about pay cuts and potential layoffs as the college struggles to deal with COVID-19.

It pointed out that in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, which shut down in-person learning at Bates in mid-March, “the lowest paid and most vulnerable of our community have lost resources,” including pay and benefits, “that we rely on to meet our basic needs and the needs of our loved ones.

“We reject the notion of continuing to give more while having resources taken without discussion or consent. We can’t afford to give more while receiving less,” the letter said.

It said that many of the college’s employees and students were recruited “with promises of a commitment to our mission, to emancipation, to social justice. Instead, many of us are faced with assimilation, depression, fear, and isolation in a community that either refuses to see us or hates us despite the neoliberal cries of ‘equality.’”

“We want to be seen. We want to feel safe. We want what we have been promised,” the letter said.

While the school’s administration remained silent, its women’s Ultimate Frisbee team spoke up quickly.

“Privilege and whiteness continue to be entrenched in the sport of Ultimate Frisbee,” the Cold Front team said in a written statement. “We have failed to create an inclusive space.”

The team vowed to do better.

“We recognize our responsibility to dismantle white supremacy and bring an end to police brutality,” Cold Front said. “We refuse to remain silent. Black Lives Matter.”

The letter from faculty, staff, alumni and students specifically asked for a statement from the college “acknowledging the presidential leadership role and the institution’s role in acts of oppression and harm against” black, indigenous, and people of color.

It sought a statement about “the ways that Bates structures, as well as individual racist acts, impact the college community.”

The letter calls for a plan “for disassembling racist structures” at Bates that includes definite actions immediately, at the one-year mark and within three years.

The college should also articulate how Spencer “will continue to engage and lead these initiatives, earning the support of our larger community,” the letter said.

Though Spencer has not responded in public to the letter, her statement on racism June 2 said that Bates has “an urgent responsibility to prepare our students to be conscious, informed, and ethical actors in the world. This cannot happen unless we teach them the history and modalities of racism, equip them with the tools to fight against it and motivate them to act for justice as they carry out their lives.”

“The work of racial equity and anti-racism is central to our mission, and it should guide the actions we take every day as an institution and as individual members of this community,” Spencer said.

“We know from our students, faculty, staff, and alumni of color, and others who care deeply about these issues that we have a long way to go to protect members of the Bates community from racist acts,” she said.



Clayton Spencer Bates College

“We have an even longer way to go to foster a campus and culture where every student is supported for success across all aspects of their college experience and all students feel the ownership and belonging that are crucial to personal growth and transformation,” Spencer said.

Those protesting said in the letter that the name Bates, founded by abolitionists, “echoes alignment and social activism synonymous with anti-racism.”

It pointed out that there are many people and initiatives at the college “working to unsettle structures of oppression at Bates.”

But, it said, “There will be no institutional realization of these initiatives without a larger institutional plan devised by the top leaders of the institution. Our name will only protect us for so long and now is the time to act.”

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